

U.S. Consulate General Shanghai

Welcome to the May newsletter! Here are this month's topics:

New Topics:

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- Voting: First Step First – The FPCA
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- Summer Olympics and Paralympics in China
- Leaving Shanghai Consular District?
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Greetings from the U.S. Consulate General Shanghai

Dear Fellow Americans,

As we reach the beginning of the summer season, we would like to send a friendly reminder on a few items:

Travel Registration

If you have not yet registered with the U.S. Consulate, we encourage you to do so. By registering, you will receive emails with up-to-date information regarding travel warnings, Consulate messages, and other important announcements.

Keep Your Passports Safe!

Every summer, we see an increased amount of passports reported lost or stolen. When you lose your passport, you are required to report it lost or stolen to the Chinese Entry and Exit Bureau first. Then you can come to our office to apply for a replacement passport and then return to the Chinese Entry and Exit Bureau for an exit visa to leave China. This process may take several days. Please safeguard your passport at all times! The most common scenarios for a lost passport include:

- **Leaving a bag on a chair next to you at a restaurant
- **Failing to safeguard passport after exiting customs and collecting luggage at the airport
- **Carrying passport in outside pocket in crowded areas, or while on the subway or bus

Volunteer to be a Warden

In light of the tragic events in Sichuan, many have asked what they can do to help should such a crisis occur in Shanghai's consular district. One of the best ways to contribute, is to become a volunteer warden in your area. Please send us an email for more information: shanghaiacs@state.gov

Yours truly,
American Citizen Services

Upcoming Primary Elections

The following primaries are upcoming:

June 1 Puerto Rico
June 3 Montana
South Dakota

Additional information:

The FVAP can be contacted via 1-800-438-8683. Citizens may reach the FVAP toll-free from 67 countries using the toll-free numbers listed on the FVAP website, www.fvap.gov. The toll-free number for China is 10-800-120-0925. Questions regarding the above may also be referred to the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program, Department of Defense, 1155 Defense Pentagon, Washington DC 20301-1155, and email at vote@fvap.ncr.gov.

Voting: First Step First – The FPCA

The Federal Post Card Application Form (FPCA SF-76) is the first step in the absentee voting process. This form is accepted by all states and territories as a simultaneous request for registration and/or an absentee ballot. The current version of the form is dated October 2005 but the 1995 version of the form is still in circulation and is still a valid registration and absentee ballot request form.

Citizens voting under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) are eligible to participate in all elections for Federal offices in their state of legal residence. Many of these citizens are also eligible to vote in state and local elections.

Because election laws vary from state to state, we recommend you consult the 2008-2009 Voting Assistance Guide for specific information regarding your state's laws. The Guide contains state-by-state procedures for UOCAVA citizens to register and/or request an absentee ballot using the FPCA. All shaded areas for your state or territory as indicated in the Guide must be completed. The Guide is available online at www.fvap.gov/pubs/vag.html.

Things to Remember When Filing Out the FPCA

Fill out ALL blocks shaded in your state or territories' instructions in the Guide.

When filling out Block 3, "My Voting Residence", you must include a complete street address of where you actually lived in the state or territory in which you are voting, in order for the Local Election Official to place you in the proper voting precinct. A post office box is not appropriate. If your address includes a Rural Route, use Block 6 "Additional Information" to indicate the specific location of your residence. For example, state "2 miles south of the intersection of Route 9 and I-34." This address should be different from your Block 4 address and must be within the county or township where you claim legal voting residence.

When filling out Block 4.a, "Where to Send My Voting Materials", enter the complete mailing address where you are currently living and where you wish to receive your absentee ballots. This address must be different from your Block 3 address. If you will have a new mailing address by the time election materials will be sent to you, please be sure to indicate this address here.

In order to vote in Presidential or state primaries, most states and territories require that you specify your party affiliation in Block 5. Refer to the Voting Assistance Guide for specific information regarding your state's primary elections.

If you use the online version of the FPCA, be careful where you download the form. The official online version of the FPCA is available at www.fvap.gov and each Service's website. County websites may include a version of the form to be used by citizens voting in a specific jurisdiction. Make sure you are eligible to use that form and vote in that jurisdiction before using downloading and completing the form.

Travel Alert: China

This Travel Alert advises American citizens that a 7.9 magnitude earthquake struck China's eastern Sichuan province on May 12. Due to rescue and relief operations, damage to infrastructure throughout the area, and the continuing potential for aftershocks, U.S. citizens are urged to defer travel to Sichuan province. This Travel Alert expires on June 30, 2008. The epicenter of the quake was near Wenchuan County, approximately 55 miles northwest of Chengdu, Sichuan's provincial capital. While there was less damage in Chengdu itself, cities and towns closer to the epicenter suffered significantly with thousands of casualties. Chinese authorities report that over 13,000 people were killed, over 25,000 injured, and many more reported missing. These figures are expected to rise as more information becomes available. Although the Chengdu airport is open, scheduling flights, particularly outbound flights, remains difficult. The airport in Jiuzhaigou, close to the epicenter, is closed for all but emergency services. Ground transportation throughout the region is also not yet operating normally. Road conditions in the areas of impact are problematic, with many roads difficult to pass. The only rail-line service currently in operation is from Chengdu to Shaanxi. Telephone service near the epicenter is still poor, although some text messages and cell phone calls seem to be going through. Telephone service for the rest of Sichuan generally seems to be back to normal.

The U.S. Consulate in Chengdu is open for full consular services and is assisting U.S. citizens in the region. Officers from the U.S. Embassy in Beijing have been sent to Chengdu to assist.

U.S. citizens in the region are urged to contact family members in the United States regarding their safety and welfare, monitor the local news and maintain contact with the U.S. Consulate in Chengdu. U.S. citizens with family members in China should continue to attempt to reach them by telephone or email. Family members and friends unable to verify the safety and welfare of U.S. citizens in the affected area should call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada or from other areas via a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. Information on earthquakes and earthquake preparedness may be found at www.ready.gov/america/beinformed/earthquakes.html and at www.fema.gov/hazard/earthquake/index.shtm.

The U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai can be reached 24 hours per day at 86-21-6433-3936. The addresses and telephone contact information for the US Embassy and Consulates are at the bottom of this alert.

U.S. citizens residing or traveling in China are reminded to register with the U.S. Embassy or closest U.S. Consulate by entering your travel itinerary and contact information at: <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs>.

U.S. Embassy Beijing: No. 2 Xiu Shui Dong Jie, Chaoyang District. tel: 86-10-6532-3431 Email: amcitbeijing@state.gov. Embassy's website: beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn.

U.S. Consulate General Chengdu: Number 4, Lingshiguan Road, Section 4, Renmin Nanlu, Chengdu 610041, tel. 86-28-8558-3992 Email: consularchengdu@state.gov.

U.S. Consulate General Guangzhou: The Consular Section is located at 5th Floor, Tianyu Garden (II phase), 136-146 Lin He Zhong Lu, Tianhe District, tel. (86-20) 8518-7605; Email: GuangzhouACS@state.gov. Guangzhou adoptions Email: GuangzhouA@state.gov.

U.S. Consulate General Shanghai: The Consular Section is located in the Westgate Mall, 8th Floor, 1038 Nanjing Xi Lu, Shanghai 200041; tel. (86-21) 3217-4650, Email: Shanghaiacs@state.gov.

U.S. Consulate General Shenyang: No. 52, 14th Wei Road, Heping District, Shenyang 110003; tel. (86-24) 2322-1198, Email: ShenyangACS@state.gov.

Ban of Liquids on Domestic Flights

The General Administration of Civil Aviation of China (CAAC) have announced new regulations banning liquids to be carried onto domestic flights.

There is an exception for liquid cosmetics in containers with a capacity of no more than 100 ml. The containers should be placed in a transparent, resealable bag with a maximum capacity of 1 liter. Each passenger will be allowed to carry

only one bag onto the airplane. The liquid cosmetics will be opened up and checked before you will be allowed to take them on board.

Exceptions are also available for baby food and milk as well as prescription medication.

Due to this new regulation, the process of screening passengers has been slowed down at airports. Therefore please leave ample time when you are traveling by air.

For more information, please contact the airline you are traveling on.

Economic Stimulus Payments – Exceptions

The IRS (Internal Revenue Service) recently mailed an information package to 130 million households and individuals who regularly file tax returns related to the recently signed Economic Stimulus Payments.

It is important to understand that the tax stimulus payments are not applicable or available to the following individuals:

- * Non resident aliens.
- * People who are claimed as dependents or eligible to be claimed as dependents on another's tax return.
- * Those individuals that do not have a SSN (social security number).

Please go to <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=179201,00.html> for more information.

In the next several weeks, the IRS will mail approximately 500,000 of these packages to individuals living outside the U.S. In the meantime, U.S. citizens may refer to the IRS web site at www.irs.gov for information on benefits, eligibility and other details regarding the Economic Stimulus Act.

Renewing U.S. Passports Ahead of Summer Travel

U.S. citizens who will be traveling this summer are strongly encouraged to check their passports (and those of their family members) now to confirm that they have not expired. Many governments also require travelers to have at least 6 months validity left in their passports for entry into their countries.

If your passport has expired or is nearing its expiration date, you should begin the process of applying for a new one as soon as possible in order to beat the summer rush. A passport applied for at the Consulate can take two to three weeks to process. The processing time is already quite fast so we cannot expedite your application.

Don't let a long-awaited and well-deserved vacation become a nightmare because of an expired passport!

Someone Asked the Consul: We want to take our ayi with us on vacation to the U.S., now does she get a U.S. visa?

All domestic employees must qualify for a business visa (B-1) on their own. They must prove they have sufficient ties to a residence abroad that will compel them to leave the U.S. after a temporary stay. American citizens are not allowed into the visa waiting room, and will not be permitted to participate in the visa interview.

General requirements include, but are not limited to:

- **at least one year of employment with current sponsor
- **employer is visiting U.S. for a temporary period
- **a signed employment contract for the time in the U.S.
- **U.S. Labor laws apply. Employer must prove that the ayi will be paid according to minimum wage requirements in the U.S.

Fulfilling the requirements above does not guarantee issuance of a visa. A visa may be issued only when the applicant independently qualifies and when it is clear that all U.S. labor laws will, in fact, be upheld.

Upcoming Holidays and Other Closures

Please remember that the days just before and just after a holiday are often extremely busy and you can expect significantly longer waiting times. If you visit us outside of these times, you should have a shorter wait. A full list of all

of our holiday closings is online at <http://shanghai.usembassy.gov/holidays.html>. Americans who require emergency assistance during holidays should contact their nearby Embassy/Consulate.

Summer Olympics and Paralympics in China

Are you planning to go to the Olympic Summer Games or the Beijing Paralympic Summer Games this summer? The Department of State has released a fact sheet that provides essential information for travel to China. Read the fact sheet carefully at http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1762.html and start preparations for your trip early. China Earthquake Relief – How can I help?

Since the devastating earthquake on May 12, 2008, many organizations have offered humanitarian assistance to meet the needs of those affected.

Below are just a few organizations that are accepting donations in support of China Earthquake relief efforts, and this list does not reflect any particular endorsement by the U.S. Government:

Operation Blessing China: <http://www.obchina.org/>. A division of non-profit, parent organization, Operation Blessing International, has been operating humanitarian projects in China since 1999 through its coordination offices in Beijing, Lanzhou, Hong Kong, and Chengdu. Their programs include healthcare, surgical assistance, clean water, education, and disaster relief. Operation Blessing China through its office in Chengdu and in coordination with the Red Cross and the China Social Work Association has staff on the ground meeting the needs of the affected population.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies: <http://ifrc.org>

The American Red Cross: www.redcross.org

The China Red Cross: <http://www.crcf.org.cn> More than 35,000 local Red Cross staff and volunteers have been working with rescue and medical teams to distribute tents, food, water, clothes and medicines around the clock. The Red Cross and Red Crescent efforts will target the most affected, paying special attention to special health and psycho-social needs of the most vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, pregnant mothers, the displaced and disabled, among others.

Network for Good:

<http://www.networkforgood.org/topics/international/earthquake/china080512.aspx?source=YAHOO&cmpgn=HMPCRS>

Network for Good offers links to several sites of organizations accepting donations for China Earthquake Relief and other disaster relief.

Additional Donation Information:

US Embassy Beijing weblink to the information below: <http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/public.html>

Public Donation Information

The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for earthquake response efforts in China can be found at www.interaction.org.

The U.S. encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, warehouse space, etc); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietary, and environmentally appropriate assistance.

We encourage people to donate to an organization of their choice. A list of organizations can be found at....

* USAID: www.usaid.gov – Keyword: Donations

* The Center for International Disaster Information: www.cidi.org or (703) 276-1914

* Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at www.reliefweb.int

Leaving Shanghai Consular District?

If you are departing from Shanghai consular district after a long stay here, and you formally registered your stay with the U.S. consulate, please be sure to "cancel" your registration when you leave.

You can deregister yourself by visiting the travelregistration.state.gov site if you were previously registered through this site.

If you previously submitted your registration at the U.S. consulate, you may deregister yourself by sending an email request to ShanghaiACS@state.gov.

Links of Interest to Overseas Citizens

If you have difficulty accessing the official Federal Voting Assistance Program website, you may also try the following links to get voting information.

Association of Americans Resident Overseas (AARO)

<http://aaro.org/>

Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas

<http://www.fawco.org/>

Expatriate Exchange

www.expateexchange.com/

American Citizens Abroad (ACA)

<http://www.aca.ch/>

Overseas Vote Foundation

www.overseasvotefoundation.org

Democrats Abroad

Tel (202) 863-8177

Fax (202) 863-8063

www.democratsabroad.org

info@democratsabroad.org

Republicans Abroad

Tel: (202) 608-1423

Fax: (202) 608-1431

www.republicansabroad.org

chairman@republicansabroad.org

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